



PUNCH

OR
THE LONDON CHARIVARI



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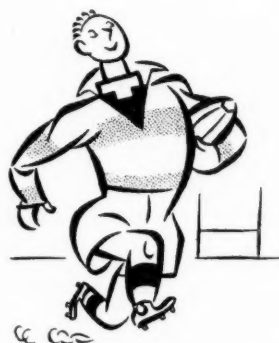
Charivaria

ACCORDING to an Ankara news message those 1,700 German air force officers and specialists who were not in Syria have now arrived back in Germany.

Before the war Germany dumped thousands of cheap alarm clocks in this country. Which is probably why we took such a long time to wake up.

We read of a Vienna girl who was sent to prison for trying to pull out a handful of Dr. GOEBBELS' hair. Perhaps she wanted to put it in a locket.

An American newspaper man says he once interviewed GOEBBELS in his office and noticed a picture of HITLER on the wall. What did he expect? A picture of GEORGE WASHINGTON?



A gossip-writer observes that the lettuce he planted turned out to be radish. Which of course isn't at all bad for an amateur.

Cutting the Cackle
"The wedding was a quiet one, there being no bridesmaids,"
Yorkshire Paper.

A Yorkshire clergyman announces his retirement from rugby football. Opponents who met him on the field will never forget his severe clerical collar.

"Men's hats are obtainable without coupons and may actually become cheaper," we are told. This news has caused grim smiles on the saturnine faces of hotel cloak-room brigands.



Now You Know

"London, April 13 (Canadian Press)—The British Broadcasting Corporation reported today that the Maharaja of Jodhpur has received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Life Guards [the British service similar to the United States Coast Guard]."
American Paper.

The new Abyssinian coinage now being minted in this country has, we are told, a hole stamped in the middle. MUSSOLINI, of course, made a hole in most of the previous issue.

A London restaurant advertises that it has no music, homely cooking, quiet, efficient service and an old-time atmosphere. What! *Onions?*

We are told that if the Germans invade this country they must be delayed as much as possible and kept away from the railway. This sounds contradictory.



Requisitioned or The Temper of Tamwash

I TOLD him that I was naked, hungry and penniless, with nothing to smoke and nothing to drink. I was perfectly calm and reasonable, you understand. I told him that for two years the Germans had been trying to bomb me out of my flat, and had missed it every time, bar one. I didn't deny that His Majesty's Government had powers to hurl me out neck and crop into the street at a moment's notice without guaranteeing my rent, and to succeed in doing what the Nazis had failed to do. Nor did I desire, I said, to point out that all my days were spent in trying to earn a few shillings to keep me off the dole in a business ruined by the war, and my nights in watching other people's premises to save them from incendiary bombs. I told him——"

"Who was this man you told all these lies to, Tamwash?" I said.

"Lies your great-grandmother. He was a Deputy Assistant Sub-Director of Evacuations and Evictments, some such jumped-up Jack-in-Office, with an utterly illegible cyclostyled signature, on an utterly illiterate form. He——"

"Did you call him all that to his face?"

"Of course I didn't. Haven't I told you I was perfectly mild and courteous from beginning to end. It took me hours and hours to get an interview with the confounded ass, and I had to go through room after room infested by parasitic clerks drawing useless salaries at my expense and yours. I told him that this kind of thing didn't annoy me at all. Years ago I had been one of them myself. All I wished to say was that the whole of the road in which I lived was lined with large unoccupied empty houses, whose owners and tenants had left London two years ago; houses, I pointed out, far more suited to his needs than my miserable inconvenient little flat. And what do you think he had the infernal insolence to say?"

I couldn't imagine.

"He said that the Government was the best judge of the accommodation that was needed, that I had to remember there was a war on. I admitted that my memory was notoriously inaccurate, and begged his pardon with becoming humility. All the same the accommodation was wanted, so I understood, for a section of the Armed Forces of the Crown. They were intending to use my wretched little *pied-à-terre* (half-way up to the sky) as part of a military barracks. I wanted him to consider my insignificant hovel from this angle and this angle alone. I had taken the lease on an assignment, and the original tenant's idea of suitable decorations and fixtures had been chiefly looking-glasses and chromium. Granted that the Armed Forces of the Crown would naturally want to spend most of the day trimming their long whiskers in front of my looking-glasses, there were other curious points of interest about my flat. There was a maid's bathroom, for instance. It was much too small really for the maid, and the bath in it was particularly small. Had they a very small member of the Armed Forces of the Crown suitable for fitting into my maid's bath? There was no natural light in the vestibule, I told him, and as soon as you came in you tumbled down two steps immediately inside the front door on to your head. Was that sort of thing, happening night after night,

going to keep the Armed Forces of the Crown in good fettle for fighting the Germans? I said that the doors fitted very badly and I was afraid that the troops might suffer from the draught. There was at least one mouse in the kitchen, I said; there were five or six black-beetles. Were the Armed Forces of the Crown accustomed to deal with mice and black-beetles? I told him that the refrigerator was a permanent fixture but scarcely large enough to ice the enormous rations of the Armed Forces of the Crown. And I told him that if I hadn't wanted to be scrupulously polite there was something more I should like to say."

"And did you?"

"As a matter of fact I did. I said that the Prime Minister had commanded us in the event of an invasion to 'Stay Put.' How could a man 'stay put' if he was always being chased from house to house and tenement to tenement by continual eviction orders from Government Departments? An Englishman's home was said to be his castle, and he was even allowed to defend it against the enemy until they knocked it to bits. At the present moment it appeared that an Englishman's home was his furniture-van, and unless he sat on the top of it, and had it fitted up like a tank, he would merely be blocking the streets with unarmed civilian traffic and impeding the efforts of the Armed Forces of the Crown. I told him that furniture-removing seemed to be the busiest of the reserved occupations, employing masses of man-power, and that estate agents put in twice as many hours a day as munition workers and Government clerks. Estate agents at least had to walk about and look at places, instead of seizing blocks of flats with a stroke of the pen, and chasing harmless civilians up and down the suburbs with triplicate forms in buff envelopes. He then asked me if that was all I wished to say and I said 'No.' I said I had one cigarette left and I hoped he would take it, as a token that the interview had been conducted in a quiet and reasonable manner without undue warmth on either side. As I told you, I was perfectly——"

"I know you were," I said. "You always are."

* * * * *

I didn't meet Tamwash for several days after that. When I did, he was beaming. He was full of cordiality and goodwill.

"Haven't they turned you out after all?" I asked him.

"Turned me out? Of course they have. But I discovered the reason for it from the letting agents of the place I'm now in. The Government were all out after good steel and concrete buildings that wouldn't come down too easily if they were bombed. As soon as I knew that, I wrote to this fellow at once and withdrew my protest and apologized. It was obvious, I said, that the Armed Forces of the Crown ought to be safer than mere civilians. They are far, far more important than we are. I said they could have my spare radio-set, my sun-blinds and two old vases, if they liked, for flowers. He never answered that letter at all."

"I suppose not," I said.

Queer fellow, Tamwash.

EVOE.



NO EGGS

"How could you expect anyone to lay without getting a bit more food?"



Clerk in Khaki

WHEN World War II snatched me up from one desk and dumped me down at another I felt that my life was going to be much the same, even though my trousers were different. But I am learning that other things are different too, the desks being a case in point.

Mine at Figgins and Scroope's was large, square, polished, uncrowded, and my wire-baskets were emptied as soon as they were filled. My present desk is a stout plank, poised delicately on not-so-stout trestles, and my wire-baskets are filled as soon as they are emptied, if not before. Nevertheless, I was cheered to see these baskets on my first morning, because they seemed a link between civilian and Army life; I was even moved to say to my colleague Lance-Corporal Raddish that I noticed there were a couple of baskets on my desk. I had not learned then that the Army calls baskets trays, and other things baskets, so Lance-

Corporal Raddish's reply puzzled me; he paused in the whistling of "Basin Street Blues" to suggest that I should tell them to clear off on to their own desks. As things turned out, I rather wish I had.

At Figgins and Scroope's I rang bells and people answered them. Here the process is reversed. At Figgins and Scroope's I was Mr. Scroope. Here I am 146756847 Pte. Scroope. However, it is fruitless to repine. Those old days can never come again, for all that was outward and visible of Figgins and Scroope's has dwindled to a few terse sentences on a V.O.W.1 form; an indiscriminate bomb snatched us from the Bankruptcy Court in the nick of time.

It was on my second morning that the files began to arrive. I found the first one lying quietly in my IX tray (or IX wire-basket). It was a good plump file, tied up with string, its contents bursting out eagerly at either end. On the front was the simple inscription

WEAPON-PITS, and underneath that, in green scribble, "Mabel. Parson's Green 46756." Attached to the file's cover by a paper-clip was a piece torn from an envelope bearing a further message—"Attention Scroope."

I began to give it attention.

It contained an assortment of documents, their only common feature being that none of them had anything to do with weapon-pits—whatever weapon-pits might be. There were many Army Forms, generously lettered and numbered. Some of these were underlined here and there, and one had "Boots for Pte. Frogg," written neatly in red ink across the corner. There was a mimeographed lecture entitled "Sanitation," torn in two, and a sheet of good quality notepaper headed "Tuesday Morning" and bearing the following message, doubtless in code:

Dear Edith, I can't believe the rain-pipes need seeing to as badly as the

Stephensons make out. If I remember rightly it was less than a year ago that we . . .

There were other puzzles too—puzzles that would have presented little difficulty if I had been at my old desk in the City. I should have summoned young Andrews or Miss Waterbury or the girl with the snub nose whose name I could never remember. One of them would have been almost certain to know what to do and, what's more, would have done it. If by some extraordinary chance they had all failed me, then there would have been a last (if forlorn) hope in old Figgins himself . . .

But they think highly of initiative in the Army; they encourage self-reliance. That's why nobody is allowed to suggest a course of action to anybody else. That, I assume, is why, when I asked Lance-Corporal Raddish what the stuff was on my desk he answered, "What do you think?" When I said I hadn't the slightest idea he said neither had he, and began whistling "Frankie and Johnnie."

In the far corner the Station Clerk was typing ponderously, as if he had a grievance against every key he struck. When I approached him with the file he said that if I hadn't anything to do but walk about the office I had better go and help Private Cox to sort the letters. So I hid the file in a drawer and devoted the rest of the day to looking for Private Cox. Everybody was most reticent about his whereabouts, and I was unable to trace him to his lair.

The next morning there was another file in my IN tray. It was very much like the previous one, except that it was even fatter and was tied up with part of a boot-lace. The label clipped to the cover said "Attention Scroope" as before, but the folder was this time entitled "B/W7465Kf. Waiting." By lunch-time it was still waiting. I had had an opportunity to examine the contents, and had just given up hope of making head or tail of them when too strong a grip on the folder shot them out all over the floor like the inside of a cream bun. When I had gathered them together I accidentally replaced the folder the other way up and was surprised to see that the inscription on the top cover now said PROCEEDS FROM SWILL SALES. This was an unmistakable clue, and I eagerly ran through the papers again hoping for confirmatory evidence. There was none, and my hopes were dashed.

In the City I earned some small reputation for qualities of tenacity, not, I like to think, entirely without cause. So I went over again to Lance-

Corporal Raddish. He suggested, without giving the folder a glance, that it was not meant for me at all.

"But look!" I said, pushing it under his nose. "It says on it."

"Oh, that," said Lance-Corporal Raddish, and began to whistle "The Darktown Strutters' Ball."

At the end of the day I had an inspiration. I took the Weapon-pits file from its hiding-place and put it, together with its friend "B/W7465Kf. Waiting," in my OUT tray. But on the following morning they were where I had left them—and my IN tray was quite blotted from view by a huge mound of fresh files. They were of all thicknesses, and the range of their titles ran such a dizzy gamut of fantasy that for the best part of an hour I could only sit and stare, fascinated, at the outside of their covers. When I was sufficiently myself again to inspect them in more detail I began to realize that somebody or other had an exaggerated idea of my capabilities. "Attention Scroope," said the scraps of clipped paper. Well, I had given them my attention all right, and it seemed that I had nothing else to give.

I glanced round the office. The Station Clerk was pounding at his machine. Raddish was flicking over a quantity of horrible mauve booklets and whistling "Ain't Misbehavin'." Beyond them was the door to the Inner Office, through which only the bravest dared pass. I strode across the room, knocked upon and passed through this door, my courage in both hands and my heart practically between my teeth.

"Yes?" said the officer at the table. I gathered myself. Then I told him

about the files. I took a chance upon his being a man of sensibility, a man who would not allow a trifling difference in rank, in the cut and quality of a uniform, to stifle a cry for help. I chose my words with care. I made a man-to-man business of it. And I got away with it.

"Um," he said, when I had finished. "You're new, aren't you?"

I admitted that I was, very.

"Give you a tip about files and folders. Keep 'em moving." The officer consulted a list of typewritten names hanging on the wall. "Attach a slip of paper passing 'em on to Private Scroope. And while you're at it, you might take these along too."

And from the floor beside his chair he scooped up the largest pile of files I had yet seen.

"Seems a very capable man, Scroope does," said the officer as he thrust them into my arms—"besides, it's such a damn silly name."

And thinking it over, back at my desk, I had to agree that it was. But it occurred to me presently, as I began to detach the slips of paper and write out new ones, that Raddish's name was really almost as silly.

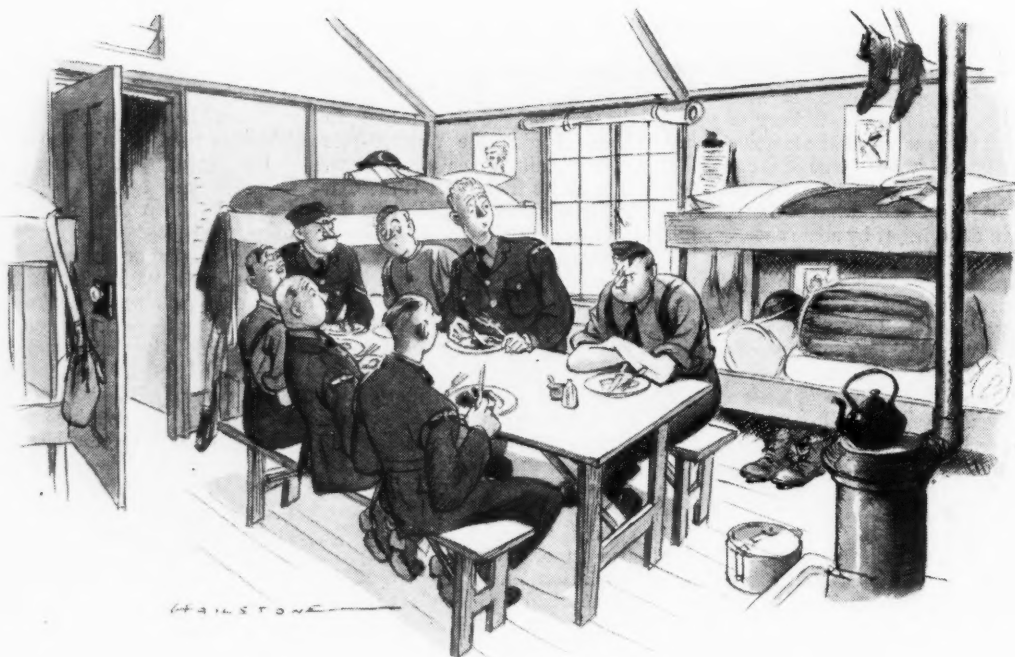
○ ○
"HOW THE JOCKEYS STAND"
Daily Paper.

Like merrythoughts, as usual?

○ ○
"230, Freeman-street, is now transferred to
26, Freeman-street, corner of Kent-street."
Lincolnshire Paper.

Bombs or sleight-of-hand?





"For the third and last time, 'Arris, will you pass your Corporal the condiments?"

Butchers' Troubles

AUCHTERBROSE,
SCOTLAND.
Friday night

To Mr Spout M P

DEAR SIR,—This is Mrs Dusty Mrs Pilkie and Mrs McSump writing and got your kind letter to ask if this place was in much trouble with regards the rations. So we think we best tell you about the butchers which us three can give a Jack Easy looking on story of because we get our meat from Drumly by the van.

For to let you understand. There is just the two butchers here which is Wullie Flesh and Jock Turnip. And when the new ration books came out the last time nearly all Wullies customers changed over and registered with Jock and Jocks came over to Wullie. Because they all thought they would get more beef. Topsy turvy it was. But of course no difference happened and the rampaging complaints about short of beef went on as before on both sides.

Well the new ration books for this

time is out now. And if these women have not went and turned over once more. Wullies customers is registering with Jock again and Jocks have signed on to come back to Wullie. The Head Food man has wrote the Provost to ask if this change about holus bolus every time is to last for ever till the end of the war and could the women not be got to see reason. Reason Mr Spout M P yon women could not see reason from a telescope. They are going about saying we have our legal rights and we will change as often as we like. And your old friend Comrade Bawl that worries you that much with his questions at your meetings is backing them up.

Of course the butchers themselves Wullie Flesh and Jock Turnip is going about fair demented. Says Wullie before the war me and my customers was like bosom chums one and all. And then they said criminal things against me says he and now they want to come back like prodigal sons. But I will not have them back says he. And Jock Turnip says the same. Us butchers says he should be defended

against daft women. And not one ounce of beef will I ever serve yon old customers of mine in my shop again says he. Some has advised them to close their shops. But the poor men has to earn their livings. And what to do nobody kens. The wee school-mistress said to us it was like Gilbert. Though we never heard about Gilbert or where it was. And there is some says maybe the parliament will have to be called in.

So there is some meat rations for you to think about Mr Spout M P thanking you

Yours most respectful

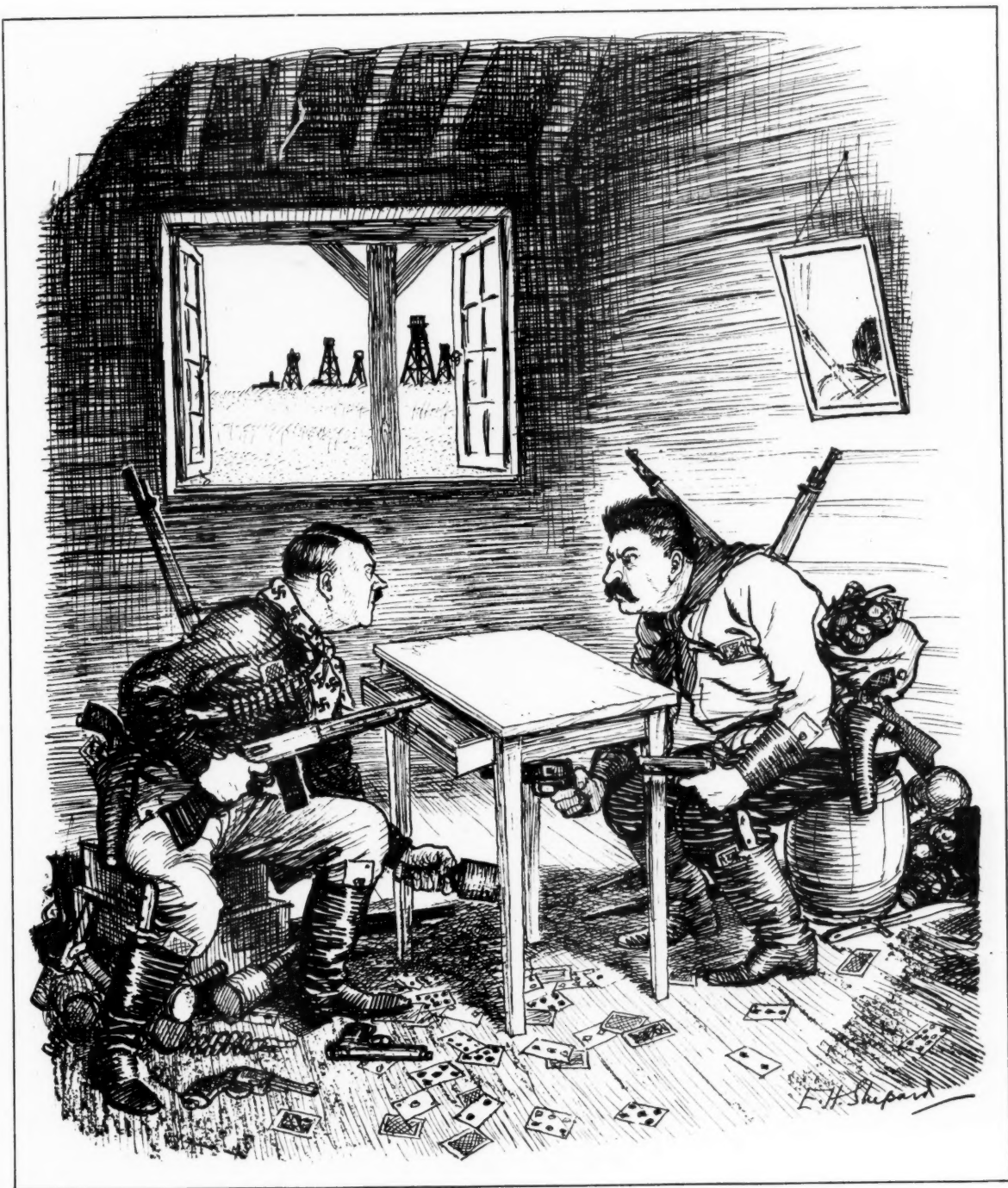
MARTHA DUSTY (Mrs)

MARY PILKIE (Mrs)

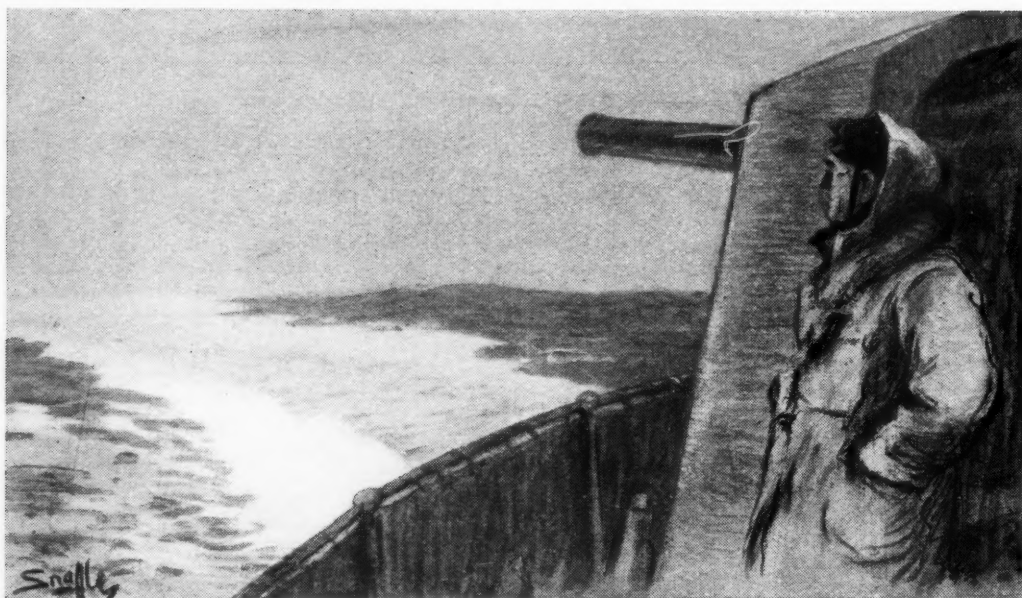
HELEN MCSUMPH (Mrs)

P S—We take up the pen once more to let you know Mrs Doops has just come in about a story that has broke out most strong through the village. It is that Wullie Flesh and Jock Turnip is stopping the butcher trade and amalgamating themselves together into a barbers shop for men only.

D.



THE END OF A GAME .



NORTH OF SIXTY-THREE

"A THOUSAND THANKS"

"A THOUSAND thanks, the men and myself are most grateful to you. There are still bitter East winds blowing in the bleak places where the guns are, and the woollies are much appreciated."

Letters of appreciation reach us from many directions, expressing the gratitude of the Fighting Forces, of the bombed and homeless, of the hospitals and many others who benefit by gifts from the PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND. These gifts are only made possible by your generosity and contributions. Please help us to help those on whose courage and unceasing efforts so much of our liberty depends.

If you have helped us with contributions already will you please help again? If this is your first introduction to the Fund will you please become a subscriber? Donations will be gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Summer Rain

FALL soft, fall sweet,
Come cleanly down,
Smoother, smoother away
The tired Earth's frown
Who, stirring, smiles
And glad receives
From Heaven the balm
Her lover gives.

Wash from my eyes
As from a screen
The ugliness
That they have seen
Of broken men
And twisted steel
And hands that clutched
A burning wheel.

I bare my head
And cool-dropped peace
Runs from my hair
And bathes my face
Until, when done,
The summer rain
Sends me refreshed
To war again.

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, June 17th.—House of Lords: A Lord Bishop Heaves a Rock or Two.

House of Commons: Finance Bill, Committee Stage.

Wednesday, June 18th.—House of Commons: Eggs—and Ships and Sealing-Wax—Take the Field.

Thursday, June 19th.—House of Commons: Another Secret Session Promised.

Tuesday, June 17th.—There was a BRET HARTE atmosphere about the House of Lords to-day. The Bishop of BIRMINGHAM, severe-faced and intense, got as near calling another noble Lord "an ass" as his lawn sleeves would allow. Lord WOLMER, in character as the other member of that extremely vigorous debating society upon the Stanislaus "who happened to be meant," followed tradition by heaving (metaphorical) rocks at him to some considerable extent.

The Bishop, whose criticisms of the cement industry cost him big money in the Court which adjudged them slander, had a good many hard things to say about the industry, this time with the protection of Parliamentary privilege.

He complained about air-raid shelters, and what are called "cognate subjects." The Lord Spiritual showed himself a master of the temporal art of hitting hard.

Lord WOLMER, whose special love and aim in life is cement—he is a Director or something in the strange hierarchy of Controllers and Directors thrown up by the war—lashed out too, accusing the Bishop of swallowing Communist propaganda.

The Lord Bishop looked as if he were swallowing *something* at that very moment. It was evidently an old row. But, rather surprisingly, nothing concrete came of this stormy discussion on cement.

The Commons had that gently somnolent air associated with the flaming month of June in happier and less hard-working times. Then Mr. ATTLEE, Lord Privy Seal, made the House sit up, both literally and figuratively.

Right out of the blue, in reply to an innocent-looking question from Mr. JIMMY DE ROTHSCHILD, he announced that developments "of high importance" had been made in the efforts to defeat the night bomber. These had been the result of brilliant work on the part of our scientists, who had produced "ingenious devices" to make

even more unsafe the little flutters of the *Luftwaffe* over our towns.

And there were more ingenious devices to come, said Mr. ATTLEE, to delighted cheers, for scientists were to be organized and directed in their ceaseless work.

Mr. DAVID GRENFELL, Secretary for Mines, got into trouble over the singularly untimely subject of keeping the home fires burning as a protection against the ravages of frost. Members and Mr. GRENFELL between them generated enough heat to keep a good many homes warm for a good many nights—but it all ended in smoke.

Sir WILLIAM DAVISON, the rather serious-minded Member for South Kensington, seemed mildly surprised

looking cool and collected, asked that soldiers should have the chance of looking at any rate cool by being allowed to shed their anklets in hot weather—assuming there is any, and that the Censor permits it to be admitted. Captain DAVID MARGESSON, the War Minister, in the snappiest thing in gents' suitings seen around the Palace of Westminster for some time, replied in his silkiest tones that anklets might be dispensed with by soldiers (artistic pause for dramatic effect) *at dances*.

The House was so amused by the sheer "nerve" of this adroit handling of the matter that the Minister got away in a cloud of laughter, leaving only Dr. SUMMERSKILL muttering inaudible things which did not *look* too complimentary.

Mr. CHAPMAN, the Assistant Postmaster-General, whose elocution is the envy of all M.P.s (or ought to be) added the more red-tape Civil Service to his enviers by trotting out this full-throated phrase: "In present circumstances, my Right Honourable Friend is not prepared to promote amending legislation in the sense indicated by my Honourable Friend."

Which is apparently the Post Office way of saying "Nothing doing!" As one Member remarked, "If the G.P.O. had to pay 2½d. a time, like ordinary mortals, they would say things more snappily!"

Then Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, Chancellor of the Exchequer, took the floor with an elaborate explanation of the system by which Pauls who *paid out* "tax-free" incomes were to be relieved of war-time increases of taxation, which would, however, be paid by those Peters who *received* the incomes. It all seemed extremely complicated and rather lacking in that crystal clarity for which income-tax forms are so justly famous.

However, Mr. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, who is reported to use income-tax regulations for week-end reading, affected to think the plan plain and straightforward—and the House is usually content to leave it at that, on the principle that what the mind doesn't understand the heart doesn't grieve over.

This trifle out of the way, the House turned to the Committee stage of the Finance Bill, which raises a few thousand millions to pay for the war—or several weeks of it. There was a little chit-chat on some of the points, a modicum of diffident criticism on others, a soupçon of very, very mild suggestion on others. But Sir KINGSLEY's famous smile never left his face.



THE CRETAN THUNDERER

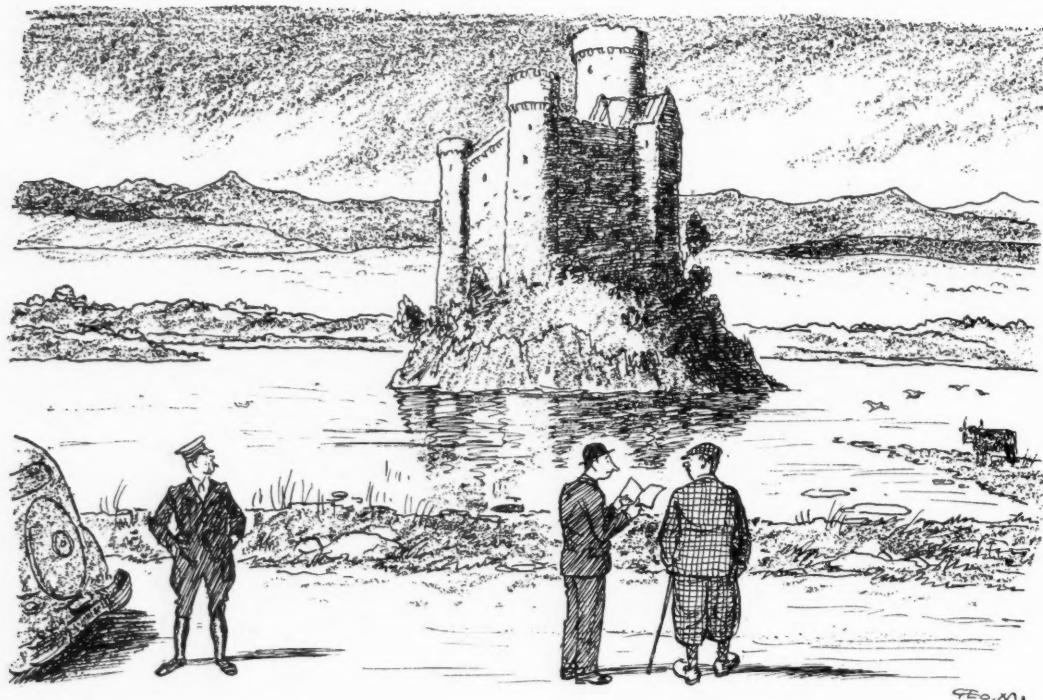
(After a design from Gnosso)

Lord Trenchard on the defence of Crete

at the titters which greeted his demand for coupon-free clothes for "those who had dirty work to do o' nights."

Mr. OLIVER LYTTTELTON offered a contribution to Mr. Punch's Anthology of Little Glimpses of the Obvious: "War brings changes." Mr. WOODBURN, who seems to combine—in some way obscure to those who know only the old-fashioned Parliamentary practice—the ability to be a Parliamentary Private Secretary (who, by tradition, says nothing in the House) and also a very persistent and pertinacious questioner, begged leave to add this to the same highly-exclusive volume: "Clothing is a necessity to people who work."

Dr. EDITH SUMMERSKILL, herself



"My Department instructs me to inform you that, provided the roof is mended and concrete floors added, and the ghost exorcized by a reputable clergyman, they will be prepared to recommend that the building be requisitioned."

Indeed, when Sir HERBERT WILLIAMS said something right at the end of the debate which would have devastated most Ministers, Sir KINGSLEY laughed aloud. Whereupon even Sir HERBERT, with a "what-can-you-do-with-such-a-man" expression, gave up, the Bill was passed, and Sir KINGSLEY left, humming a merry tune.

Wednesday, June 18th.—Even a great war does not lessen to any extent the apparently insatiable curiosity of M.P.s, and to-day's Question-time produced this assorted information:—

No photographs of Deputy-Fuehrer HESS are to be published—because there aren't any. Forty-two Ministry of Information officials work on the ascertainment of "public opinion"—a process which Sir PERCY HURD indignantly called "secret snooping." Captain WATERHOUSE, of the Board of Trade, promised to ask schools to modify their clothing regulations in view of the advent of coupons. Mr. CHURCHILL said that so far from thinking too many people were getting

bravery awards, he wanted more recommended.

Major GWILYM LLOYD GEORGE, of the Food Ministry, made a statement about eggs. The Major is usually a model of clear exposition, but eggs seemed to have thrown him off his balance, and it was not at all clear whether we are to have eggs, eggs are to have us, or whether, as one Member put it, "the yolk's on the Minister."

Members went away with puzzled expressions.

Thursday, June 19th.—Mr. SPEAKER announced the death in action of quiet Mr. DUDLEY JOEL, Conservative M.P. for Dudley. The House will miss his gentle manner and unostentatious sagacity.

The PRIME MINISTER promised—or threatened—yet another secret session soon on the shipping position. Members showed some lessening of their passion for secrecy, and it was with some reluctance that the proposal was provisionally accepted after Mr. CHURCHILL had used all his powers of flattery on the House.

At the Ballet

"ORPHEUS"

"NOTHING is easier to invent," ROUSSEAU once bitterly remarked, "than an excuse for a ballet. . . Priests dance, soldiers dance, gods dance, devils dance; they even dance at funerals. Everybody dances about everything." If he had lived in the twentieth century he might have added "and to everything." We have had BRAHMS with Russian salad, and devilled LISZT. Mr. FREDERICK ASHTON has given us SCHUBERT with a red nose, and Mr. KEITH LESTER CHOPIN with a red tie. So we wondered in what guise GLUCK would appear when, gloomily prepared for the worst, we went to see his opera *Orpheus* presented as a ballet with solo voices by the Sadlers Wells Company—GLUCK who strove so mightily to relegate the impertinent and irresponsible ballet of which ROUSSEAU complained to its proper place, who had the hardihood to tell the great

VESTRIS to his face that he would have no dancers frisking about the stage in *his* operas, and who had now, after nearly two hundred years, at last fallen a victim to the insatiable choreographer.

But a pleasant surprise was in store, and Miss NINETTE DE VALOIS, the choreographer, and Miss SOPHIE FEDOROVITCH, who designed the décor and costumes, are to be congratulated on a delightful production. The choreography has all the dignity of the music and is free of exaggeration, and the groupings are of classic simplicity. Most of the action takes place against a plain sky-blue background, which conveys a feeling of freedom and space, and the contrast between the distant, ethereal effect of the white-robed spirits in the Elysian Fields scene and the warm gold of the dancers' dresses in that of the "Return to Earth," with its suggestion of sunshine and fruitfulness, is very happy. The famous airs are beautifully sung by Miss NANCY EVANS and Miss CEINWEN ROWLANDS. One is sung with the curtain down, with great dramatic effect; but nowhere does the action on the stage do other than enhance their expressiveness. Mr. ROBERT HELPMANN as *Orpheus* gives a fine and restrained performance. Miss MARGOT FONTEYN dances as well as ever as *Love*, and Miss PAMELA MAY is a charming *Eurydice*.

The Undeserving Poor

AS Mrs. Lapin dumped a bundle of refugee clothes in the hall she called out "I hope they'll go to the right ones, that's all. These slum women are sluts, half of them."

"It's extraordinary," I agreed, "not to keep respectable and clean, however poor one is." I was just going to go on about soap and water being cheap, when I remembered that if I were a Poor I shouldn't be a Deserving Poor at all. I would unhesitatingly sweep the bits under the chiffonier, pull up the bed-clothes and leave the dishes piled in the sink. The washing would go to the bagwash.

My mornings would be spent leaning against the door-post gossiping to my right-hand neighbour if I found my left-hand one "kept herself to herself"; my afternoons among the street markets, hunting for bargains in earrings or food, if I didn't actually take on a stall myself.

I'd be back to give my husband his tea. (It's always "his tea"—never one's own apparently.) It would be absolutely delicious: liver sausage and tinned crab, or possibly jellied eels as a treat. And in the evening it would be the cinema. My children would be the despair of the district visitor, who would find them on the doorstep, in

company with the cats, licking toffee apples, making any hope of being clean that day unlikely.

And as to the serviceable flannel shirt I drew from the Relief Office, I'd pop it at once to pay the next instalment on my fur coat.

And I'd far rather stay and be bombed than bored.

o o

A Hint for Ration-Time

IT'S pleasant that you keep popping in, Mr. and Mrs. Waters, With your darling ravenous little son and your three eupeptic daughters. And what a happy coincidence it is for us all—or is it?—

That the hours that suit us best for meals should suit you best to visit!

W. K. H.

o o

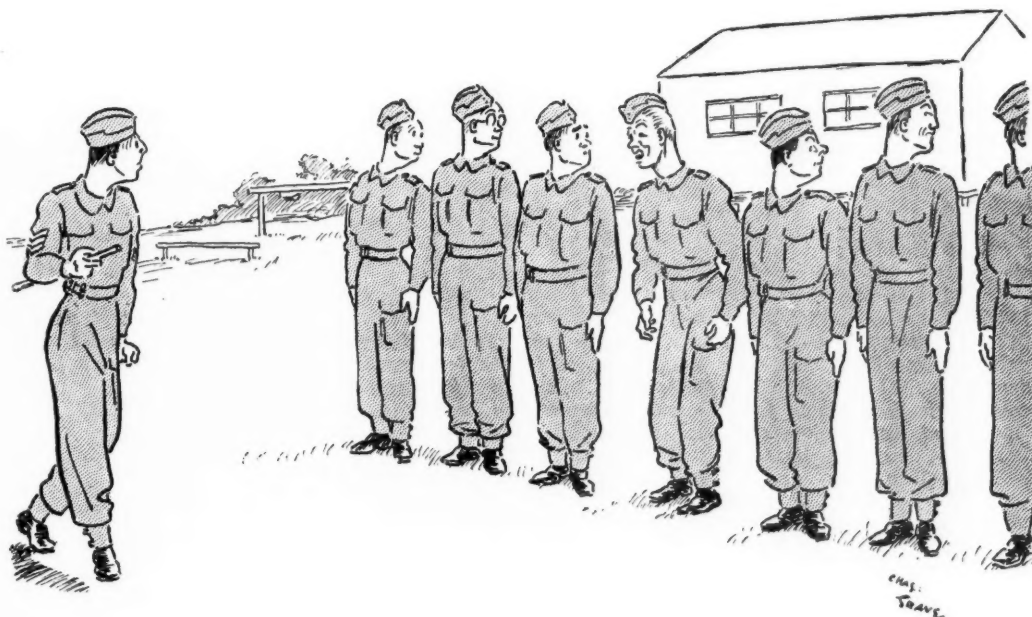
"... in the fields the skylarks are unquenchable."—*Daily Paper Nature Note*. Don't let the A.F.S. hear you say so.

o o

"Crux of current discussion on British strategy seems to be that the enemy's skill and daring have been consistently underrated, that there has been too much locking of stable doors after the horse has flown."

News Review.

Oh, Pegasus, where art thou?



"Eyes WHAT, Sergeant?"

Little Talks

LISTEN to this: "Astrological reasoning tells us that since the middle of last month queer things have been going on beneath the surface—"

Where?

Ireland, I gather.

Well, did it need any astrological reasoning to arrive at that?

Exactly. It—

It reminds me of a sentence in dear old Garvin's Broadside the other day. I cut it out. Right at the end of the third long column it came. "Nothing in this article is new to our readers"!

Sweet. Anyhow, it's wonderful how the old gun keeps firing. And, anyhow, the Observer has no astrologer.

Nor has the Sunday Times.

Almost the only Sunday sheets that haven't.

I know. I never can quite see why these star-mongers aren't against the law. Isn't there a law against fortune-telling?

There is. But presumably it doesn't apply or H.M. Gov. would have done something.

What is the law?

We'll look it up. I've only a Law Lexicon here, but—"Forprise. For-speaker. Forthwith. Fortifications." Here you are!: "Persons pretending or professing to tell fortunes are punishable as rogues and vagabonds under the Vagrancy Act, 1824. See further GYPSIES, PALMISTRY."

What about the gypsies? When they say "You'll have beautiful children, Sir, and travel abroad," are they—

I think they are. Strictly, they should confine themselves to statements of fact, such as "You've a kind face, gentleman."

But surely these star-blokes are professing to tell fortunes?

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But you can't tell till you've seen the statute and all the leading cases and so on. Here's another book which says: "A person telling fortunes or using any subtle craft or otherwise to deceive—e.g., casting astrological nativities..." I suppose the defence would be that there's no intent to deceive—and they're not in fact deceiving. Because what they say is all so vague—and all such nonsense.

I'm not so sure. I think a lot of people take it very seriously—and are deceived.

I don't know. It's so general. They can scarcely be wrong. Look at this—the celebrated Mr. R. H. Naylor:

"As hinted above, another invasion is about to be staged. I cannot with confidence forecast which frontiers will be crossed. I can only tell you that similar astrological indications are due in the next few weeks to those which preceded Poland, Scandinavia, Holland and Greece." In other words, in the next few weeks Hitler may invade England, Ireland, Spain, Egypt, Cyprus, Greenland, Iceland, Portugal, the Azores, West Africa, Russia, Sweden, Syria—

Even the military experts, with all their caution, would go as far as that.

Quite. And whichever Hitler chooses, Mr. Naylor will quote, in italics, what he said to-day, and say: "Ha, ha! I was right!" Well, you can't tell me that anyone takes that sort of thing seriously!

I'm not sure. And anyhow, that's not all. There's all the personal stuff. Read that bit out of your law-book again—the second bit.

"A person telling fortunes or using any subtle craft or otherwise to deceive—e.g., casting astrological nativities."

"Nativities"! That means "horoscopes," doesn't it?

I believe it does.

But nearly all these Sunday papers are "casting horoscopes" for their readers—not by name, but by classes—by birthdays. When's your birthday?

September 24.

All right. Here's what the Sunday—says about you:

"LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22). Excellent opportunities for progress."

Capital! I'll go ahead.

Ah! But listen to what "Capricorn"

says—

Who's he?

Sunday Pictorial. He says:

"LIBRA (Sept. 24-Oct. 23). Not a good week for making changes."

Negative "progress," then?

Yes. He goes on: "The offer of a better-paid position should be regarded with suspicion, and you shouldn't give up your present job just for the sake of extra money. You will be happier where you are. Opportunity for advancement will come later."

That's odd. They are trying to give me a step up. And I'm trying to refuse it.

That may be. But it doesn't fit very well with the other fellow, does it: "Excellent opportunities for progress"?

Perhaps not.

Well here's another:

"LIBRA-BALANCE (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Despite opposition on Tuesday the week will be extremely busy."

That's odd. I've got a difficult night operation to do on Tuesday—a Service affair: and two days later I've got to make a long speech in the country which I haven't even begun to prepare. I shall be busy, all right.

Yes, but has all this got anything to do with "business"?

Not a thing.

Because, you see, Number Four says:

"Sept. 24-Oct. 23. Outstanding week in business."

Well, what ought I to do? Chuck the speech; let down the Min. of Inf., and do some business?

Well, if you took the thing seriously, I suppose you might. And I am told a lot of people do.

How about your own birthday?

Well, I was born on August 16. Naylor says about me: "Mid-week fortunate for most interests. Beginning and end may bring hold-ups and money worries, but all's well in the end."

End of what?

The week, I suppose.

Can't be. He's just said not.

"Capricorn," on the other hand, says: "This is a bad week, either for borrowing or lending money. Choose Friday for seeking favours."

Well, there you are! Naylor said you'd have worries at the week-end.

Number Three says:

"LEO-LION (July 23-Aug. 22). Leo people must be cautious in financial matters."

That's what "Capricorn" said!

True. He also says: "Aug. 16 folk"—that's me—"must be tactful in business transactions with their elders." And Number Four simply says, "Tact will be essential."

Well, I call that pretty good. They all seem to have the same drill for Leo. Keep your mouth shut—and your pockets too.

Yes, but which week couldn't you say the same to everybody? However, I must say the way they agree, sometimes, is as remarkable as the way they don't. Choose a date in April.

April 29.

Right. "Capricorn" says: "Look forward to Friday and Saturday to change your luck." Naylor says: "Light on one long-standing problem about Friday." And Number Three says: "Friday is the most suitable day for practical action."

Remarkable. There must be some rules in this game.

Yes. But look at Aries (March 21-April 20). Number Three says: "Aries folk make great progress in their vocations this week."

Good show.

And "Capricorn" says: "This week may prove aggravating in the occupational field."

A small slip-up somewhere, I think.

Yes. And take June 30, which comes under Cancer. "Capricorn" says: "Friday should prove an exceptionally lucky day." And the Sunday Star says: "Make the fullest possible use of Monday." Both can't be right.

Oh, yes, they can. The stars mean "Work hard on Monday and put something on a horse on Friday."

Yes, but in war-time, if anybody's going to give advice, it ought to be "Work hard every day of the week." And that's why I think these fellows ought to be stopped—

Oh, come!

Yes. Anybody who really believes in this stuff about Monday being a bad day and "put off all important engagements till the end of the week," is going to take a day off on Monday and not do very much till Friday. And I believe there are millions following these fellows. A lot of people buy the paper for the star-man only. Otherwise, why do all the popular papers have one?

I can't think why, if they have a star-monger they believe in, they have anything else. He makes most of the rest unnecessary. Why have solemn articles weighing all the possibilities in the Balkans; why have long yarns by military experts explaining all the things that Hitler may do; why have "Our Diplomatic Correspondent's" queries about the way that Stalin's mind is working, and all the rest of it, when up on the top floor you've got some star-wizard who knows exactly what Hitler and everybody else are going to do?

Because they don't really believe a word of what the star-wizard says. And, if that is so, I say they're deceiving the people, and ought to be prosecuted.

There may be something in what you say. A. P. H.

Bulldog Breed

"Although this is not a pleasant walk owing to its proximity to the Sewerage Farm, it is a right of way and should be kept open by use."

From a "Local Walks" Guide.

"This line runs along a larva bed forming a steep slope between 15 and 20 yards high."

Manchester Paper.

The little fellow is always rolling down.

Star-Cross'd Lover

WE were young, we were gay, we were lovers, and the world was a garden of flowers:

Now the blossoms are faded and fallen, and a winter unending is ours. We are parted, and parted for ever—condemned without hope of reprieve; For my love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.

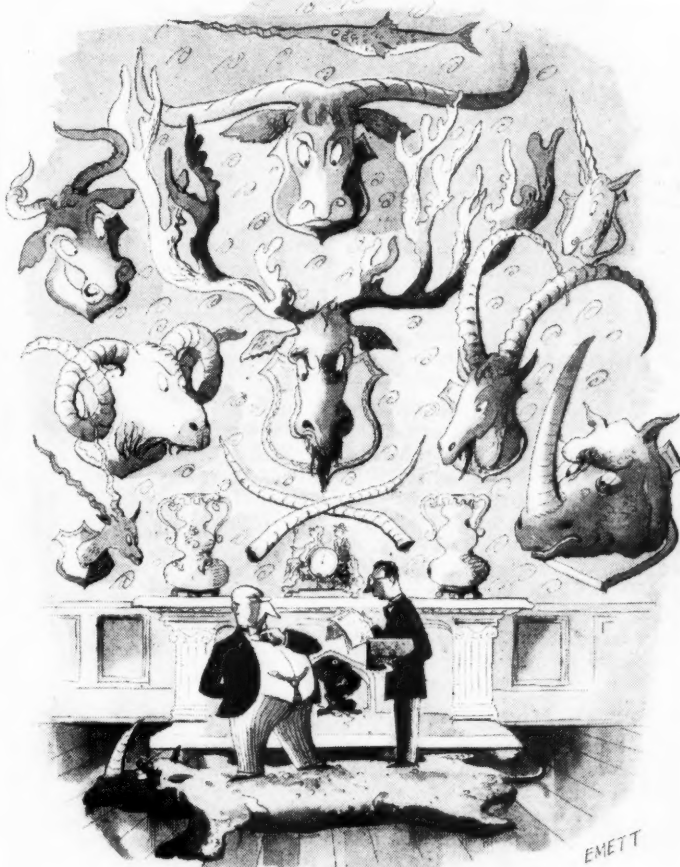
We have met since it happened, but somehow—Paid Lance-Bombardier though I am—

I just can't make love at attention, while addressing the loved one as "Ma'am." Oh, Spirit of Wellington, aid me! A soldier has no right to grieve.

But . . . My love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.

So play me "The Flowers of the Forest," let me drain sorrow's cup to the dregs.

I have loved, as a carefree civilian: I have lost, as laid down in King's Regs. Let me burnish the breech of my Bofors and forget about seven days' leave; For my love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.



"I'm afraid, my Lord, we must draw our horns in a little."



"Good morning, Miss Padstow—please take a rather strong letter to the Ososnowy Laundry."

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

The Story of a Year

It seems natural to assume some connection between Mr. J. M. SPAIGHT'S *The Battle of Britain, 1940* (GEOFFREY BLES, 10/6) and the brilliant anonymous booklet, almost identical in title, with which the Air Ministry has been making something like a record in sales. There is none, however, excepting that both deal with the same subject. Mr. SPAIGHT includes, as rightly belonging to the Battle of Britain, most of the events of the war, however distant their scenes of action or apparently remote their relation. We get, then, a view of the big action of which the fighting over Britain last year was a portion, and of that portion we are given more details and more strategical exposition than the booklet offered. Our numerous raids into enemy and occupied territory take their places as incidents in an offensive framed to supplement the fierce defensive fought at home and to serve as preliminary steps to a greater offensive which will eventually turn the tables. It is of course too early to give to all such matters their true historical value, but it is well to have on record, as Mr. SPAIGHT gives them, the exploits of many whose doings may be overshadowed, though not surpassed, before the story is complete.

Mirror for England

When for eleven years you—an American dramatist and novelist—have lived in England every summer, you become, especially if you are a sensitive, witty and practical woman, more or less one of us. So much is Miss ELSWYTH THANE one of us that she returned here for the summer that waned into Munich and the summer that blazed into war; and her *England Was an Island Once* (CONSTABLE, 7/6) shows how the tranquil country of her memories was transmuted into the beleaguered citadel of her admiration and solicitude. Here then are the memories: the reward of

an exquisitely flattering inquisitiveness which is perhaps the most characteristic of America's tributes to our national genius; and to watch Miss THANE hot on the trail of who taught the swans at Wells to ring for their dinner, or to see her handle the Retired at Bath like fragile old curios, is to discover her at her diarist's best. But when she comes back in July 1939 to barrage-balloons over London, it is her crisis as well as ours; and before (and after) the American Hegira carries her home she spends herself answering American questions. "Why," they ask, "weren't they readier?" And "Why," she replies, "aren't we?"

Portrait of a Blighter

The heroine of Miss RICHMAL CROMPTON'S new novel is effective enough as a boggy though perhaps hardly credible as a woman. It is as if one of those nurses who tell little girls that the faces they make will stay put had wielded a malign power to bring the portent to pass. *Stella Markham*, placed in a niche of childish perfection by a doting aunt, is compelled to remain in the niche all her life. No one who is not a worshipper is retained in *Stella's* circle; and a blight of disapproval gradually falls on her governess, her aunt, her fiancé, her husband, her two sons and the wife she had designed for the elder of them. *Narcissa* (MACMILLAN, 7/6) is a clever, rather sub-human story whose classical title ranges it soundly enough among the myths. It might with equal justice have been called *Medusa*, for *Stella's* petrification of her world strikes one as being so involuntary as to be almost blameless. It is, after all, the set of shiftless pagans who can neither exorcize the devil in *Stella* nor keep their end up against her magic who are really the legitimate butts of this rather depressing book.

The Expert Revolutionary

Light on many of the curious happenings—labour difficulties, strikes, riots and so on—in various parts of the world, is to be found in the uncompromising autobiography called *Out of the Night* (HEINEMANN, 15/-), by JAN VALTIN. The author, a German, was a professional revolutionary working as a militant member of the Communist offensive. Until the rise of HITLER his organization seems to have been



"Jim Edwards tells me a feller gave 'im and the Corporal a lift and gave 'em a fiver and a packet of fags each."



Company Officer (during a lull in a push). "WE DO LOOK A RAGGED LOT OF SCARECROWS, DON'T WE, SERGEANT?"

Sergeant. "YES, SIR. I OFTEN THINKS TO MYSELF WHAT A JOB WE'RE GOING TO HAVE GETTIN' MEN TRAINED UP TO PEACE FITCH AGAIN AFTER THE WAR."

G. Jennis, June 26th, 1918

able to carry on in Germany without severe restriction, and there were many occasions when his party was scheming in collaboration with the rising Nazis. When the Nazis triumphed their vigorous onslaught on the Communists drove them "underground," and VALTIN had a very severe dose of Gestapo prisons and concentration camps. He obtained his release by agreeing to spy for the Nazis, and in the end he was pursued by both sides. His story, told without reticence, is that of a fanatical partisan of modern Russia. The translation is fluent but with a transatlantic flavour—as, for example, when the author is addressed by a Scotland Yard detective as an "unspeakable hoodlum."

Detective's Holiday

When William Weigand, the detective in FRANCES and RICHARD LOCKRIDGE'S *Murder Out of Turn* (MICHAEL

JOSEPH, 7/6), went to stay at a holiday camp with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. North (who are friends for many of us as well), he met most of the other cabin-tenants at a tennis tournament. It was a haze of people, too rapidly moving and confused even for Weigand's trained habits of identification, so readers should not be disappointed by their own bewilderment. But by the time a convict's ex-secretary has been knifed, another girl murdered by fire, a man half-killed and Mr. North injured, the remaining people have become characters instead of names. By this time we want to join Weigand in his game of hunt-the-villain, and the chasing matters more than the tracing. The authors treat us to twelve pages of magnificent thrills when they describe the motor-race where the villain in one car with a third proposed girl-victim is pursued by the Norths and Weigand in two others. This superb piece of writing is worth all the trouble we may take to reach it.

At the Pictures

HICCUPS OR SONG

SOME of the "Lubitsch touches" in *That Uncertain Feeling*, which Mr.

LUBITSCH both produced and directed, are rather "easy," rather crude. Some Lubitsch touches always were; but in this piece regrettably more of them are regrettably more so than usual. Even at that they are not obvious enough for a section of the audience, whose all-too-gradual crescendo of delighted understanding, as they grasp the inwardness of something that for the rest of us has about as much inwardness as a brass plate, often quite drowns some of the (for all I know, better) lines that follow. . . . There can be few of you by this time who don't know that the fable concerns a wife whose hiccups, a psycho-analyst tells her, are brought on by her husband's neglect. The subtlety of the psycho-analyst's approach is not matched by that of the husband's adviser; but then the husband sells insurance and his confidant is an old lawyer—less subtle types. Anyway this old lawyer tells him the problem is to "sell marriage with a new slant"—for by this time the wife has ended her hiccups by having an affair with a tough pseudo-genius musician, who calls her his little cadenza. (The best she can offer in return is "Snoogie.") And so on, and so on—and much of it I admit is entertaining and funny enough; but the whole thing trembles on the edge of second-rateness, and one gets an impression of waste. MERLE OBERON walks elegantly through the part of the wife; MELVYN DOUGLAS drops his jaw and hangs his cheeks and is often very funny as the husband; BURGESS MEREDITH comes near to smashing the illusion by seeming, at first, something like a real genius; the backgrounds are uniformly luxurious; and the picture

will be enjoyed most by aggressively normal people, who laugh at the very words Modern Art and are bored stiff by BACH.

Try as I may I can never work up any of the serious feelings that seem to

as (or in) the other, whether it is overpoweringly sad that she has grown up. These ethical and philosophical considerations always seem to me to be remote from the kind of story in which she is usually involved. *Nice Girl?* (Director: WILLIAM A. SEITER)

is basically the same one as usual, put over with more emphasis—for this time Miss DURBIN is one of three sisters, all of whom with charming absurdity try to seem grown-up. Multiply the phenomenon by three and you get three times as much charm too, that's the idea. Perhaps you agree. "There's only one rule in this house—all jokes are funny," says the father of the girls at one point, and that sums up very well the frame of mind you should adopt to enjoy the picture. (I suppose the advice is unnecessary; for judging from what I always overhear, that is the frame of mind that nearly everybody who goes to a DEANNA DURBIN picture is perpetually in.)

But these are harsh words.

The story is pleasant, though too obviously contrived; Miss DURBIN is her usual attractive self; all the other characters are nice people. FRANCHOT TONE and ROBERT BENCHLEY deal

competently with what might be called—to adapt the phrase used by a contributor to these pages a year or two ago—H.S.B.H. (hiding-smile-behind-hand) parts, always prominent in films about youth. HELEN BRODERICK is the pawky housekeeper, WALTER BRENNAN her faithful admirer the local postman who also (by a happy coincidence) conducts the local band and is thus able to provide plausible cues for songs. In the course of the story Miss DURBIN sings four songs, and at the end, bearing all the signs of having been tacked on to the version for British audiences only, comes "There'll Always Be An England," rather too slow. I could have done without this (to be frank) sung at any speed, by anybody (if you must know), ever; but it was a kindly thought.

R. M.



[*That Uncertain Feeling*

INFORMATION—I

Sebastian BURGESS MEREDITH
Jill Baker MERLE OBERON

come so readily to other commentators on DEANNA DURBIN pictures—whether she (considered not as the fiction-character but as Miss DURBIN) should do this, whether she ought to be seen



J. H. BOND

[*Nice Girl?*

INFORMATION—II

Cora Foster HELEN BRODERICK
Hector Titus WALTER BRENNAN

Waiting Man

YESTERDAY I was Waiting Man of the Guard and I had the not uncommon experience, in the Army, of being unable to find out exactly what I was supposed to do. Like the rest of the unfortunates selected for guard I spent the previous evening polishing buttons and cleaning my rifle and so forth, and at 9 A.M. I duly appeared on the parade-ground.

We fixed bayonets, and were inspected. Then the guard commander shouted out "Waiting Man—dismiss!"

I turned smartly to the right and marched away. Then, on the edge of the parade-ground (which is really just a field next to the camp) I stood and watched. The guard went through the usual ceremony of unfixing bayonets and then fixing them again, of loading their rifles, of marching hither and thither, and then changing places with the old guard. The whole thing was over in about ten minutes.

When the new guard was safely settled in the guard tent, with the sentry marching up and down trying in vain to terrify a couple of sheep that had strayed in, I approached the guard commander.

"What do I do next?" I asked timidly, for I am still new enough in the Army to be nervous of corporals.

"You simply rejoin your subsection," said the guard commander, "and carry on with your normal work. Then if one of the guards falls sick we send for you and you take his place."

So I took off my overcoat and all the other splendid paraphernalia that make the difference between an ordinary soldier and a guard, and went in search of my subsection. They were digging a large hole in the ground. Nobody knew what the hole was for. Lieutenant Flower had ordered it to be dug, and that was enough for Corporal Cussing. Usually the holes ordered by the subalterns to be dug in the morning are ordered by the C.S.M. to be filled up in the afternoon; but that, as Corporal Cussing says, is what makes the British Army what it is.

"I am Waiting Man of the Guard," I said to Corporal Cussing, "and I have been instructed to join you."

"Rubbish!" said Corporal Cussing. "Waiting Man has to stay in the guard tent all day, and help fetch the food, etc. He also looks after the prisoners."

I put on all my clothes again and returned to the guard tent. The guard commander, who was playing chess with the lance-corporal and had just lost his Queen, was quite cross.

"What the Bishop's Fourth are you doing back here?" he snapped.

I told him, and he told me to go back to Corporal Cussing and tell him he was something something. In guards at training camp the Waiting Man might hang about all day, he said scathingly, but in Service Companies time was too valuable.

I undressed again, because the idea of digging Lieutenant Flower's hole in guard-dress did not appeal to me. Corporal Cussing, however, would not give me any work.

"The guard commander is an unmentionable unmentionable," he said. "In training camp they have a Waiting Duties of the Guard, but he is not the same as Waiting Man. Ask Sergeant Green if you don't believe me."

I asked Sergeant Green, and he said, without listening to me, that if I wanted a ticket for the Smoking Concert I must apply through the usual channels. He added that I ought to realize that there was a war on and that sergeants had no time for frivolity.

I paid one more visit to the guard commander, but this time, as he had just lost his second castle, his reception was even colder than before. So I just changed into walking-out dress and strolled down to the village for a cup of coffee. The O.C. came in while I was there and asked me what I was doing.

"I am Waiting Man of the Guard, Sir," I said primly.

"Ah! of course," he said—"Waiting Man of the Guard. Naturally."

I went back to camp for dinner.

"You are late," said the Orderly Sergeant.

"I am Waiting Man of the Guard," I told him.

"Sorry," he said. Then he turned to the mess waiter and ordered me to be given an extra sausage. "He is Waiting Man of the Guard," he explained.

I spent the afternoon at the cinema and, coming out, I met the C.S.M. It was an awkward moment, because I felt that he might think I should have spent the afternoon filling in Lieutenant Flower's hole, so I volunteered the information that I was Waiting Man of the Guard, and all was well.

I kept the job until 9 A.M. next morning, but as no successor was appointed (I think I had been detailed in error in the first place), I believe I could have kept it up for weeks. But still, if we all neglected our duty, Lieutenant Flower would never get his holes dug and the C.S.M. would never get them filled in, and after all there is a war on.

The Traveller's Sample

FROM behind the uneven row of artificial silk stockings that drooped above the counter Mrs. Feeney peered with marked disapproval at the minute affair lifted from the commercial traveller's suitcase and laid upon the counter; not spread, for that would have been impossible—just laid.

"I'm a bit late the year with the bathing costumes," he said in those accents that mark him wherever he goes as a native of Ulster, "but things are every way at present and," he ended, "that's a lovely shade of blue." And so it was; but Mrs. Feeney recoiled in horror from a closer examination of the sample garment. "Before I'd hang up the like of that on me bit of coord," she said self-righteously, "I'd give in, an' I'd go into a sort of a reserve. I heard tell right enough that the two Miss Powers were on for the say-side this month, God help them, sure they'll be perished," she went on thoughtfully; but another glance at the optimistically named "costume" was too much for her.

"No," she said firmly, "I'll put it into no wan's mouth to say that Bridget Feeney was partial to such an uncommodious set-out as that," and she watched the traveller begin to re-pack his suitcase. As he did so he made an incomprehensible remark.

"Right enough," he said, "it seems to be badly worn half as many coupons as a pair of trousers," and he went on with his packing. But not having seen the morning paper as yet, nor listened to the broadcast the night before, Mrs. Feeney presumed that he meant coupons such as are, or were, enclosed in packets of flake-meal and things like that, and accumulated by those who devoured huge quantities of whatever it was: but she was quite wrong.

"Did you not hear that clothes are to be rationed in Britain from now on, Mrs. Feeney?" the traveller said reprovingly but with the almost incredulous delight of the bringer of any news, official or otherwise. "Everyone is to get sixty-six coupons from their margarine books, and they may do with those for the whole year. Man or woman, rich or poor, fashionable or quite the reverse—sixty-six coupons are what they'll get; so many for this and so many for that. They won't get as much as a handkerchief without a coupon, nor a bit of knitting-wool

either; four for a petticoat or slip, and eight for a pair of pyjamas, but only six for a nightie. But you can read it all for yourself to-night," he said, and closed the suitcase with a snap, then rushed out of the shop towards the waiting bus, almost colliding with old Mrs. Byrne in the doorway.

In his great haste he overlooked the bathing costume, and the observant newcomer saw Mrs. Feeney ram the wisp of vivid blue into the box labelled HABERDASHERY before she turned a dazed face towards her customer. As always when she is told anything really surprising, her astonished mind had seized first upon the one item in the whole disclosure that called for the least comment.

"They're to get their whole annyal yearly throussux out of their margarine ration book," she said rather doubtfully; then, passing on to the particular that had most impressed her after that: "They'll have to part wid no less nor eight of them coupons for py-jamas seemin'ly, an' only six for a night-dhress—an' that should do a lot to make them all the go agen, so it should. Didn't the Flanagan one that's home on hollyday from Belfast come in here yestherda cravin' a pair of py-jamas?"

"I was givin' mine an air of the fire, Mrs. Feeney," she says, "an' when I went back there was no account of them at all, only a few ashes." But she had to take a pink night-dhress an' very glad to get it.

"You must turn wid the tide, Mrs.

Feeney," she says when I passed a few remarks; but wait now till she has to give out her good coupons, an' it'll be another affair altogether," and for the first time the speaker seemed to be aware of her astonished customer.

"The clothes is all to be rationed in England an' above in Belfast," she told her, for her subconscious mind was beginning to yield up more of the disclosures made by the traveller; "an' they'll get so manny for this an' so manny for that, even for the wool for makin' a babby's boot-ee, the creature. Do you know, 'tis a great thing seemin'ly to be a non-belligitant, Mrs. Byrne," she went on, "an' to be able to ordher what you want an' no thanks to annyone. The way it'll be wid them will be: 'Peg's dhressed an' her box is empty,' as the sayin' is."

But this was too much for Grannie Byrne, who, like most of Eire's housewives, is finding it increasingly difficult to get what she wants.

"Musha, what's the good in ordherin'," she said loudly, "an' then nothin' to happen afther? Amn't I forever ordherin' below at the N'United Stores, an' if you ett the whole of what's upon the shelves around at the wan down-sittin' it wouldn't lean upon you afther. I remember when there was every class of a combustibile in it—aye, an' the finest of say-coal in the yard, God be wid the times!"

She sighed. "I want a black reel of cotton," she said firmly, and fixed her gaze again upon the box into which

something had been rammed with such haste—something she was so determined to see before she left the shop that she asked for sewing-cotton instead of what she really wanted.

There was nothing for it but to give in, and, removing the lid of the box, the unwilling Mrs. Feeney revealed the wisp of blue; then, going the whole hog, as it were, she too laid it on the counter.

"I bid him to take it out of here," she said of the vanished commercial, "but he overlooked it in the sudden rush he med for the bus. It's a bathing cos-toom, he says," and her tone was apologetic.

Far from recoiling, old Mrs. Byrne went nearer, and picking up the traveller's sample she looked at it incredulously. "If that's a cos-toom of anny kind," she said, "the clothes must be rationed right enough." And then her mind, working on the same principle as that of Mrs. Feeney, concentrated on one particular bit of the news—the part that dealt with the probable return to favour of the more old-fashioned slumber attire.

"They gev up the py-jammys a year ago or more where me son's young one is workin' at the munitions beyant in Glasgow," old Mrs. Byrne said suddenly, "for she wrote it in a letther to the mother at the time. 'The girls here,' says she, 'are keepin' on their night-shifts.'"

"Look at that now!" said Mrs. Feeney. "They didn't wait for the coupons at all."

D. M. L.

Epilogue

LACKING space and paper and news on the eve of his hundredth birthday Mr. Punch presents to himself with his own compliments his

Two Hundredth Volume



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